Office of Aboriginal Affairs opens in Alice Springs

4 September 2015

Economic development and job opportunities for Aboriginal communities will be the focus of the new Office of Aboriginal Affairs (OAA), which officially opened in Alice Springs today.

“The Office of Aboriginal Affairs supports the vision for Aboriginal Territorians to be empowered to participate in the Northern Territory economy, while being supported to maintain their strong connections to their lands and culture,” Chief Minister Adam Giles said.

“The OAA will guide and coordinate Aboriginal affairs policy development and drive economic reform for Aboriginal communities.

“The OAA will provide an integrated and coordinated approach to service delivery, program and policy development and future investment responses by government. It will also build and maintain partnerships with Aboriginal people, businesses, the private sector and non-government organisations.

“Part of its strategy is targeting the creation of at least 3800 new Aboriginal jobs over the next five years through a range of new procurement policies that are designed to drive economic development in remote and regional areas of the Northern Territory.”

Aboriginal employment targets and policies will include:

- Doubling public sector Indigenous employment from 1800 to 3600 employees by 2020
- Requiring each contractor to achieve 30% Aboriginal employment for all government infrastructure contracts above $500,000
- A new remote contracting policy aimed at ensuring 70% of small contracts for construction, repairs and maintenance in remote Aboriginal communities go to local Aboriginal businesses by 2017
- Ensuring a minimum of five civil and construction contracts per year valued at over $5 million are awarded to joint venture proposals with Aboriginal businesses
The OAA, in partnership with all government agencies, will also develop a series of programs to support the strategy’s aims, which include:

- Community Champions program
- Remote Contracting and Procurement policy
- Remote Economic Development strategy
- Whole of Government monitoring and evaluation framework
- First Circles Engagement

The First Circles program, an initiative of Minister for Local Government and Community Services Bess Price, is unique to Australia. It will provide for 30 new and emerging Aboriginal leaders from across the Territory to have direct engagement with Cabinet on Aboriginal affairs policy matters.

“The First Circles program aims to provide pathways for young leaders to emerge from our remote areas and become active participants in leading their own communities and in shaping the future of the Northern Territory,” Minister Price said.

“First Circles is a fantastic new engagement model that is focused on identifying, mentoring and supporting Indigenous emerging leaders in communities.”

The OAA is located at Mezzanine Floor, Alice Plaza, Todd Street Mall, Alice Springs. It sits within the Department of Local Government and Community Services and reports directly to the Chief Minister.

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